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California Performance Review

Testimony

Presented by

Terry Bradley

On behalf of

The Coalition for Adequate School Housing

August 13, 2004

Riverside, California

Co-Chair Hauck and Co-Chair Kozberg and Commission members. My name is Terry Bradley. I am Superintendent of the Clovis Unified School District in Fresno County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

As past chair of the Coalition for Adequate School Housing (C.A.S.H.), I will be testifying on its behalf in response to the California Performance Review (CPR) recommendation regarding the One-Stop-Shop proposal for the School Facility Program.

Since 1986, Clovis Unified School District has built 21 schools and anticipates building at least 8 schools in the next decade. We also have completed many additions to existing campuses and have

completed 36 modernization projects since 1991. Clovis Unified School District and C.A.S.H. members have great expertise and experience in school construction.

The CPR proposals regarding school facilities are very general in nature; consequently, C.A.S.H. has general responses to the recommendations. Subject to more specific information, which hopefully will be developed through more substantive discussion with the School Facility Program practitioners and stakeholders, C.A.S.H. will be able to provide more specific responses.

C.A.S.H. appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the CPR recommendations because we believe there are important opportunities to streamline and expedite the school construction process. These opportunities will enable the students of local communities to have new schools when they need them.

A good example of streamlining that would make the school construction process more expedient and more efficient would be to address the overly complex process of environmental oversight by requiring the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to establish specific standards for school site acquisition and school site cleanup. C.A.S.H. also supports an alternative environmental review process for school settings where schools can meet environmental standards without facing lengthy and costly delays due to unnecessary litigation on many school construction projects. C.A.S.H. believes these two proposals would consolidate review functions and speed up the approval process.

C.A.S.H. is concerned that the proposal to eliminate the State Allocation Board (SAB) would reduce a school district's ability to appeal bureaucratic regulatory interpretations and would not provide the necessary legislative policy overview. The SAB incurs virtually no state costs, yet the Board provides significant oversight and policy functions to support school construction.

Depending on how the concepts in the CPR report are actually implemented, C.A.S.H. believes that some of the recommendations potentially could increase efficiency but might not increase effectiveness. For example, the new process could be efficient but not as effective if it limits the amount of school district self-certifications and results in excessive state second guessing of school district decisions.

The current School Facility Program was created in 1998 as a result of SB 50, a program which shifted state involvement in school facility construction from a project-by-project approval process to a grant program whereby school districts gained increased responsibility for a local funding match and assumed flexibility in meeting local community needs. Over the past several years, the State's review of individual projects has again increased while local flexibility has decreased. However, the increased local funding responsibility remains. C.A.S.H. believes the recommendations could be both more efficient, as well as more effective, if the School Facility Program returned more to the SB 50 intent of matching school district flexibility along with school district responsibility for school construction decisions.

While the CPR recommendations conceptually could improve the current delivery process if effectively implemented, C.A.S.H. is concerned that too much change too quickly could result in a lack of understanding of the new process, difficulty in transferring projects in the funding pipeline revamped to the new program, loss of institutional foundations of the school facility funding processes, etc. Consequently, the One-Stop-Shop recommendation provides an opportunity to make the process faster and more efficient - but the devil will be in the details.

For example, rather than having all of the review process in a single location, consolidating all site approval processes in the California Department of Education (CDE), all plan check responsibilities in the Division of the State Architect (DSA), and all fiscal control in the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC) could result in an equally efficient program delivery.

C.A.S.H. believes that, in addition to any state function, any reorganization of the program needs to include the DTSC standards, alternative environmental review, increased self-certification, and a return to the SB 50 intent in order to have significant program delivery improvement, if program delivery is defined as building more schools faster and at less cost than the current system.

The structural reorganization recommendations and the effectiveness proposals made by C.A.S.H. can result in reducing the time required to construct and modernize our public schools, which will result in state and local cost savings because time is money. Savings in time mean savings to local school districts, and less pressure on future state bonds. C.A.S.H. does

not believe that state reorganization alone will reduce line item expenditures, but the efficiency and effectiveness proposals can save future state general fund and local expenditures.

Additional state and local savings could occur if the concepts contained in the recommendation for a stable adequate funding stream were adopted. Again, the devil is in the details and C.A.S.H. would be pleased to work with you on the specifics for providing stable, adequate funding for school facilities. Planning could be better structured, projects could be sequenced, and sites could be acquired knowing construction funds would be available when needed. The current uncertainties lead to inefficiencies and lost savings when school districts have to plan on the feast or famine uncertainties tied to passage and placement of state bonds on ballots.

In addition, C.A.S.H. has always believed that well-maintained schools are a critical component of the educational process. Furthermore, C.A.S.H. believes that sufficient funding for maintenance is particularly important in light of the voters' approval of Proposition 47 and Proposition 55, where proper maintenance is mandatory to protect the State's significant investment in school facilities. In light of the importance of adequate funding to maintain schools for our organization, C.A.S.H. recommends that the Commission take steps to ensure that adequate funding is available to maintain schools.

Finally, C.A.S.H. recognizes the CPR recommendation is the first step in a long process. C.A.S.H. believes that more hearings with practitioners and a more thorough review of the school facilities recommendations will be needed prior to developing implementation legislation. As clearly demonstrated by

the CPR recommendation, school construction is a very complex process. We need to take the time to get it right.

C.A.S.H. looks forward to working with the Governor and Administration on the recommendations contained in the CPR. We will submit additional written testimony on other recommendations on the infrastructure chapter of the CPR, as well as other parts of the report that affect the school facilities community.

For further information or response to questions, please contact myself at 559/327-9100 or email tbradley@clovisusd.k12.ca.us, or Ian Padilla, C.A.S.H., at 916/448-8577 or email ipadilla@m-w-h.com.

Thank you.